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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA-RUSSIA MILITARY EXERCISE

1. Summary: The major Chinese-language Taipei dailies focused their coverage August 20-22 mainly on the KMT's 17th Party Congress, in which Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou took over the helm of the party, and the possible future outbreak of an avian flu in Taiwan. In general, the newspapers in Taipei did not provide readers with extensive or original coverage of the on-going China-Russia joint military exercises. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," however, did run a banner headline on its front page August 20 that read: "A former U.S. official urges Asia to join hands in deterring Beijing." The sub-headline added: "[Peter] Brookes said the series of military drills by China, Russia, the United States, Japan and Taiwan will jeopardize regional security. [He warns Asian countries] not to let Taiwan become the fuse of a third world war." The newspaper also devoted almost a half of its front page that day to wire service stories on the China-Russia military drills. The pro-unification "United Daily News" August 22 devoted its page 14 to wire service stories on the military drill. One of the news stories on the page was topped with the headline: "Taiwan official: Beijing has reached its aim of joining hands with Russia in restraining the United States." The sub-headline said: "Chinese military uses [the military drills] to open door to and absorb experience of other country's military. [The drills] have attracted global attention and their long-term effect cannot be overlooked."

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, most newspapers focused on the challenges new KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou faces and the future development of the KMT. "United Daily News" ran an editorial on the China-Russia joint military exercises that focused on historical cycles and the military drills; the editorial stated that Beijing has paid a high price in joining hands with Russia in an attempt to restrain the United States and Japan and thereby daunt Taiwan independence. Taiwan Think Tank's Director for Foreign Policy Studies Lai I-chung, however, noted in an op-ed piece in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" that the joint military exercises made China and Russia appear to be united, but the countries are actually divided at heart. Hung Mao-hsiung, a standing committee member of the Taiwan International Studies Association, said in an op-ed piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" that the political significance of the joint military drills between China and Russia outweighs its military value. End summary.

A) "The Bizarreness of Historical Cycles as Viewed from the China-Russia Joint Military Exercises"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/20):

". The joint Sino-Russian military exercises are also based on the thinking [as employed in China's modern history] of 'playing off one foreign power against another,' and the price that China has paid to Russia is no less than what it did during the Ching Dynasty. Based on Beijing's agreements . with Russia, the land that China has agreed to let go and give to Russia is about 30 times as large as the land of Taiwan. If China just wants to join hands with Russia to restrain the United States and Japan in order to daunt Taiwan independence, it has indeed paid a great price. .

"Taiwan is in reality playing the same trick. In order to join hands with the United States to resist Beijing, Taiwan, in the face of increasing financial deficits and unprecedented low trade surplus, still plans to raise its national defense budget to three percent of the government's GDP. In order not to offend Japan, [the Taiwan government] also 'put aside for the time being' its most discussed and adored 'sovereignty' issue. For Taiwan, an island that can hardly walk out

[from beneath] the giant shadow of `China,' such a price is unbearably heavy. ."

B) "Joint Sino-Russia Military Exercises Appear United Outwardly But Divided at Heart"

Lai I-chung, Taiwan Think Tank's Director for Foreign Policy Studies, noted in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] (8/21):

". If one wants to analyze why China and Russia want to jointly start such military drills, a relatively more reasonable answer will be that China wants to use this military exercise to make a show of its force to the `U.S.-Japan security alliance.' Russia, on the other hand, is attempting to use this drill to release the strategic pressure it encounters in East Europe and Central Asia. .

"The `Shanghai Cooperation Organization' (SCO) is the first that will be impacted by the China-Russia military exercise because both nations are the two main leaders of this organization. After the two nations have started to conduct joint military exercises, the size of the drills may expand to include other member countries of the organization, and it will put pressure on other pro-U.S. member countries (such as Tadzhikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and observer (such as India), forcing them to keep a distance with the United States. Once SCO has successfully driven out the U.S. force, Russia may likely expand the organization to include the Caucasus in an attempt to restrain Georgia, Chechnya, and Armenia from getting rid of Russia's influence. . As a result, the future development of SCO following the joint Sino-Russia military drill is thus worth observation.

"The situation on the Korean peninsula will be the next [that is worth observation]. Since both China and Russia are participants of the Six Party Talks as well as standing members of the UN Security Council, the joint Sino-Russia military drill will not only attempt to place pressure on the `U.S.-Japan alliance' but will also seek to form a new alliance among the participants of the Six Party Talks. China has already [succeeded in] maintaining a close relationship with South Korea. If it could create a new cooperative relationship with Russia following the joint military exercise and apply it on the Korean peninsula, it will be able to form a confrontational situation between the `China-Russia-Seoul-Pyongyang' [force] and the `U.S.-Japan alliance' once the fourth round of Six Party Talks is resumed. ."

C) "How Will Joint War Games Affect Security?"

Hung Mao-hsiung, a standing committee member of the Taiwan International Studies Association, commented in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/20):

". Above all else, this [i.e. the China-Russia military exercise] is a breakthrough in the policies of both nations, who are cooperating for the first time with the military forces of a non-allied nation. The significance of this action is threefold.

"First, both China and Russia are gradually shedding their mutual suspicions. Extensive negotiations have finally resolved disputes over the thousands of kilometers of land border between the two nations, and they are now moving toward building mutual trust and becoming continental allies.

"Second, from the selection of the location for the exercise and the insistence by both sides that it is not directed at any third nation, it is clear that the political significance of the exercises outweighs the military values. Third, the atmosphere of a new Cold War in the Asia-Pacific has been heightened. Following the regular US-Japanese and US-South Korean military drills, China has held several joint anti-terrorism and sea rescue exercises with the UK, Indonesia and France. It is now embarking on large-scale military exercises with Russia. This new Cold War is sometimes obvious and sometimes hidden. .

"What impact will the exercises have on Asia-Pacific security? China's `hegemonic' rising has become a key threat to security in the Asia-Pacific region. The decision on the location of the exercises came after a disagreement with Russia over Beijing's initial desire for the exercises to take place further south, opposite Taiwan - over which it hopes to gain control, by force if necessary.

"At least Russia recognizes the sensitivity of the

situation, and was unwilling to act provocatively in the face of the designation of the Taiwan Strait as a 'common strategic objective' by the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee. Nor does it wish to cause undue anxiety for Taiwan."

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